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ABSTRACT

Recent research and literature on community college presidents indicate a common personality profile (i.e., they are hearty, frank, decisive, leaders, usually good at reasoning and public speaking, and often more positive and confident than their experience warrants). In addition, common problems characterize the work of college presidents (e.g., constraints on presidential discretion, problems of assessing performance, and no consensus on the purpose of higher education). In the 1960's, the community college president typically had no training in the community college at the university level; very little experience with the community colleges; and little training and experience in handling today's concerns. These presidents did not readily or willingly get involved with institutional advancement because competition for students was not too heavy; public funding was adequate if not overwhelming; public relations activity was considered to be self-serving; fund raising was something only private schools did; and the presidents were very uneasy in the role of fund raiser. The current community college president has no option but to become involved in institutional advancement. The image and philosophy of the community college has changed, and the new image and expanded philosophy need to be promoted in the community. The president is now the point person in all areas of institutional advancement, providing the commitment which makes things happen. (JMC)

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The Modern Community College President: as Seen by a Veteran

by
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Dr. David G. Robinson
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THE MODERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT: AS SEEN BY A VETERAN

I FEEL THAT I AM FLYING UNDER SOMEWHAT FALSE COLORS IN SPEAKING ABOUT THE MODERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT. HAVING BEEN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AND AT THE SAME COLLEGE AT THAT, MY CREDIBILITY ON THE SUBJECT MIGHT BE QUESTIONED; HOWEVER, I WOULD HOPE THAT ANYONE SERVING AS A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT IN THIS TIME WOULD BE A **MODERN** COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT. AND PERHAPS MY EXPERIENCE AND BACKGROUND MIGHT GIVE ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE TO THE SITUATION.

IN A RECENT STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE PREXIES DONE AT MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY BY IKE GIBSON USING THE MEYERS-BRIGGS, IT WAS FOUND THAT WE AS A GROUP HAVE A COMMON PERSONALITY PROFILE. IF YOU KNOW THE MEYERS-BRIGGS WOULD YOU CARE TO GUESS WHAT WE ARE AS A GROUP? WE ARE ENTJ'S...AND THE DESCRIPTION GIVES US SOMEWHAT OF AN INSIGHT INTO WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ACT AS WE DO.

> "HEARTY, FRANK, DECISIVE, LEADERS IN ACTIVITIES. USUALLY GOOD IN ANYTHING THAT REQUIRES REASONING AND INTELLIGENT TALK SUCH AS PUBLIC SPEAKING (TA TA) ARE USUALLY WELL INFORMED AND ENJOY ADDING TO THEIR FUND OF KNOWLEDGE. (AND ARE YOU READY FOR THIS) MAY SOMETIMES BE MORE POSITIVE AND CONFIDENT THAN THEIR EXPERIENCE IN AN AREA WARRANTS."

THIS LAST PART MIGHT BE WHAT ANY FACULTY MEMBER MIGHT HAVE GUESSED. FORTUNATELY, I AM A ENTJ AND I WON'T BOTHER READING TO YOU THE WONDERFUL ASPECTS OF THIS TYPE.

THE POINT IS, AS PRESIDENTS WE ARE AS A GROUP VERY COMFORTABLE WITH OUR ROLE IN THE LIMELIGHT. OUR MOUTHS ARE POISED TO TALK ABOUT JUST ANYTHING AT ANYTIME AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT BEEN COMFORTABLE WITH THIS ROLE PROBABLY HAVE A SHORT LIVED TENURE.

JOE BIRMBAUM IN AN ARTICLE CALLED <u>THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT: THE IMPOSSIBLE JOB</u>, STATES IT IS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE THERE IS FIRST, NO CONSENSUS AS TO WHAT HIGHER EDUCATION IS SUPPOSED TO DO...SECOND THAT THERE ARE CONSTRAINTS ON PRESIDENTIAL DISCRETION...THIRD, PROBLEMS OF ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WHAT WE DO SINCE THERE IS REALLY NO PRODUCT, AND LASTLY THERE IS A UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE ACADEMIC ORGANIZATION WITH THE DUAL HIERARCHY OF FACULTY AND THE BOARDS.

WHILE ALL THIS IS CERTAINLY TRUE, ALL FOUR OF THESE CONSTRAINTS ARE PRESENT IN THE JOB OF MOST ADMINISTRATORS AND

YES, EVEN OF SOME FACULTY. ITS JUST THAT WE GET OUR NAMES IN THE NEWS MORE OFTEN. IF IT IS AN IMPOSSIBLE JOB, JUST WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE WANT IT AN WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE HANG IN THERE? WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, **IT IS** A POSSIBLE JOB BECAUSE WE MAKE IT POSSIBLE, AGAINST MANY AND ALL ODDS.

I PERSONALLY BELIEVE THAT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENCY HAS EVOLVED INTO A HIGHLY VISIBLE, ELECTRONIC MEDIA FRIENDLY, POLITICALLY ASTUTE ROLE WHOSE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN PREPARATION FOR THE JOB.

LET'S LOOK AT ANCIENT HISTORY...1960 FOR EXAMPLE. THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE BREED COMING TO THE PRESIDENCY COULD BE CHARACTERIZED AS FOLLOWS:

... WE HAVE NO TRAINING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL. THE WELCOMED KELLOGG FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS DID NOT BEGIN UNTIL 1960 AND THEIR PRODUCTS WERE NOT ON THE MARKET UNTIL 1962. UP UNTIL THEN, THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES WERE CONFINED TO A JUNIOR COLLEGE PHILOSOPHY AND/OR ATTENDANCE AT ONE OF THESE INSTITUTIONS AS WAS I.

... VERY FEW WERE EXPERIENCED IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES. WHEN JUNIOR COLLEGES BECAME A SERIOUS NOTION IN FLORIDA IN THE 1950'S, PERSONNEL WERE HIRED FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES AND DEPENDING ON WHICH, LARGELY DETERMINED THE CHARACTER OF THAT COLLEGE, RESIDUES OF WHICH STILL EXIST TODAY IN OUR COLLEGES.

... TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE IN SOME MAJOR AREAS OF TODAY'S CONCERNS WERE LACKING SINCE THEY WERE NOT A PART OF OUR VOCABULARY.

FOR INSTANCE, COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN A PART OF OUR INSTITUTIONAL LIFE SINCE THE 1970S, BUT NO ONE TALKED ABOUT THESE IN OUR KELLOGG PROGRAM AT FSU. WE DIDN'T REALLY SEE IT COMING. ANY INFORMATION WE HAD WAS DERIVED FROM A CRASH COURSE ON THE SUBJECT.

... AND HOW DIFFERENT OUR SELECTION OF OUR PRESIDENTS. WE HAD NO SEARCH COMMITTEES, THE BOARD SIMPLY WENT OUT AND FOUND THE PERSON WHOM THEY FELT COULD DO THE JOB...UNFORTUNATELY THIS

RESULTED IN THE FACT THAT NO WOMEN OR BLACKS WERE CONSIDERED. EA/EO WAS NOT A CONSIDERATION EVEN THOUGH AT THE TIME, NO ONE WAS REALLY READY TO BE A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT.

FOR TODAY'S PRESIDENT, THE COMPETITION HAS INCREASED FOR THE JOB BY 50% BUT MORE IMPRESSIVE PERHAPS IS THAT ALL COMPETITION IS BETTER PREPARED, BETTER EDUCATED, AND BETTER EXPERIENCED THAN THEIR PREDECESSORS.

... AND WE WERE AN AUTOCRATIC BUNCH OF PEOPLE. WE WERE ASKED NOT ONLY TO BUILD A COLLEGE IN NINETY DAYS BUT TO SELL THE PHILOSOPHY TO A COMMUNITY WHICH MAY NOT HAVE WANTED ONE. THE PRESIDENTS, MOST OF WHOM ARE NOT NOW IN SERVICE, IN FACT, MANY NOT LIVING, WOULD FEEL RATHER UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING WHICH CHARACTERIZES MOST OF OUR CAMPUSES TODAY.

... AND THE LAST TWO AREAS I WILL MENTION ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO THE ROLE OF OUR MODERN PRESIDENT AS RELATES TO DEVELOPMENT.

... COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS NOMENCLATURE HAS GIVEN MORE THAN A COSMETIC CHANGE TO OUR INSTITUTIONS. THE TERM, JUNIOR, HAS ALL KINDS OF CONNOTATIONS WHICH PRESIDENTS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PEOPLE TRIED TO OVERCOME. I REMEMBER DR. SAM NEEL, MY FIRST PRESIDENT AT MANATEE JUNIOR COLLEGE, TALKING ABOUT HIS MOTHER'S COMMENT...SHE ASKED HIM WHEN HE WAS GOING TO LEAVE THE JUNIOR COLLEGE AND GO TO A **REAL** COLLEGE. BUT WE WERE JUNIOR IN MORE THAN NAME ONLY. WE **DID** DO THINGS WHICH WERE SECOND CLASS.

... AND PERHAPS THE MOST VULNERABLE AREA WAS THE INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT AREAS. WE HAVE HEARD THAT IT IS THE JOB OF THE FACULTY TO THINK AND THE PRESIDENT TO SPEAK AND IT IS THE JOB OF THE ADVANCEMENT PERSON TO KEEP THE FACULTY FROM SPEAKING AND THE PRESIDENT FROM THINKING. THAT JUST MAY HAVE BEEN TRUE. WE WERE OUR OWN DEVELOPMENT ONE PERSON BAND, AND OUR WORST ENEMY. WE DID NOT HAVE COURSES IN ANYTHING APPROXIMATING INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT. OUR MOUTHS WERE READY, AFTER ALL WE WERE ENTJ'S.

TODAY, WE ARE STILL THE CHIEF ADVANCEMENT OFFICER OF THE COLLEGE BUT WITH A BIG DIFFERENCE. WE, FOR THE MOST PART, HAVE A MOST COMPETENT STAFF TO HELP US WITH THAT FUNCTION. THESE CONSIST OF HIGHLY TRAINED FUND RAISERS, COMMUNITY RELATIONS PERSONNEL, PUBLICATIONS EXPERTS, AND ALUMNAE FUNCTIONARIES...SOMETIMES ALL ROLLED INTO ONE OR TWO PEOPLE.

IF YOUR PREDECESSORS DID NOT GET INTO ADVANCEMENT VERY READILY OR WILLINGLY IT WAS PROBABLY BECAUSE:

1. COMPETITION FOR STUDENTS WAS NOT TOO HEAVY...STUDENTS FLOODED THESE COLLEGES, KNOWN AS THE "PEOPLES COLLEGES" GIVING OPPORTUNITIES UNHEARD OF TO THEIR PARENTS.

2. PUBLIC FUNDING WAS ADEQUATE IF NOT OVERWHELMING...WE WERE ABLE TO EXIST ON WHAT WAS GIVEN US FROM TUITION, LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDS. OUR BUILDINGS IN THE SIXTIES WERE BEING BUILT WITH FEDERAL MONEY AND WE WERE THE DARLING OF THE STATE LEGISLATORS FOR A HONEYMOON PERIOD OF ABOUT TWENTY YEARS.

3. PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY WAS CONSIDERED TO BE SELF SERVING (AND WHY NOT) AND WE WERE SELF CONSCIOUS ABOUT IT.

4. FUND RAISING WAS SOMETHING ONLY PRIVATE SCHOOLS DID. THE GENERAL REACTION WE GOT FROM A COMMUNITY WAS THAT WE AS PUBLIC COLLEGES WERE GETTING PUBLIC FUNDS ERGO, WHY DID WE NEED PRIVATE FUNDS WHICH TOOK AWAY FROM PRIVATE ENTERPRISE. NOW THAT PRIVATE COLLEGES RECEIVE HEALTHY AMOUNTS FROM PUBLIC FUNDS, WE CAN ARGUE FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE. **AND** MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE NEED TO TAP INTO PRIVATE FUNDS FOR OUR VERY EXISTENCE AS PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, THE PUBLIC SUPPORT HAVING FALLEN OFF DRAMATICALLY IN MANY STATES.

5. AND LASTLY AND VERY IMPORTANTLY, WE WERE VERY UNEASY IN OUR ROLE AS FUND RAISERS. OUR MOUTHS WORKED WELL BUT WE WERE NOT SURE IT WOULD GET US INTO THE POCKETS OF OUR GIVERS. DEVELOPMENT, FUND RAISING, ALUMS, INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT...ALL THESE WERE TO BE ADDED TO OUR REPERTOIRE OVER THE YEARS. WE USED A NATURAL TALENT FOR OCCUPYING

> THE LIMELIGHT TO BEST ADVANTAGE: HENCE THE MODERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE HAS HAD TO BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH THE ROLE, WHETHER IT CAME THROUGH FORMAL TRAINING OR ON THE JOB TRAINING.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT THE MODERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT BECOME INVOLVED IN INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT? FIRST, THE IMAGE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE HAS CHANGED AND THIS NEEDS TO BE PROMOTED IN THE COMMUNITY. WE ARE NO LONGER "JUNIOR" TO ANYONE AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE ARE THE FIRST STEP IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS WHO GO BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL. WE NEED TO INCREASE THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR THESE STUDENTS AT OUR COLLEGES, ESPECIALLY FOR THE MINORITY GROUPS FOR WHOM ENTERING COLLEGE MAY BE A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY.

THAT IMAGE MUST BE ONE OF ACCEPTANCE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR SUCCESS. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO ALLOW AN IMAGE WHICH IS LESS THAN QUALITY IN ALL AREAS OF OUR WORK.

SECOND, IS THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR GROWTH IN PHILOSOPHY. THIS INCLUDES OUR COMMUNITY BASED CONCEPTS, LITERACY PROGRAMS, CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, AND THE HOST OF OTHER CHARACTERISTICS WHICH DESCRIBE OUR INSTITUTIONS TODAY.

THIRD, THE PRESIDENT IS THE POINT PERSON IN ALL AREAS OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT. IT IS THE PRESIDENT WHO IS MOST VISIBLE AND UPON HIS CREDIBILITY IS BASED EVERYTHING ELSE THAT HAPPENS AT THE COLLEGE. IT IS TRUE THAT IN COLLEGES WHICH HAVE A NEW PRESIDENT AND BEGIN A ZILLION DOLLAR CAMPAIGN, THE FIRST THING THE DONORS WANT TO KNOW IS ABOUT THE NEW PREXIE. WHAT KIND OF A PERSON? IS THERE A BELIEF IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE COLLEGE? ETC. ONE CANNOT EVEN BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT FUND RAISING OR ESTABLISHING A SOLID COMMUNITY RELATIONS DEPARTMENT WITHOUT CONSIDERATION OF THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT. AND I MIGHT ADD ONE CANNOT SELL AN IMAGE OF A PRESIDENT THAT ISN'T THERE. THE PRESIDENT IS THE ONE THAT THE DONOR WANTS INVOLVED IN ACCEPTING FUNDS...THE ONE THEY EXPECT AT EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS. THE MODERN PRESIDENT ACCEPTS THIS ROLE AS WILLINGLY AS IS ACCEPTED THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LEADER OF THE INSTITUTION.

AND LASTLY, THERE IS THE MANDATE THAT IT IS THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITMENT THAT MAKES THE WHOLE THING HAPPEN. IT IS STILL A FACT THAT IN MANY COLLEGES THE PRESIDENT WILL NOT INVOLVE THE OFFICE IN THIS FUNCTION. BUT IF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT IS TO WORK, IT MUST START AT THE TOP WHERE MOST COMMITMENTS BEGIN ANYWAY.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE ALL THIS WORK? THERE IS THE STORY OF THE TWO ELDERLY PEOPLE SITTING ON THE PORCH OF A RETIREMENT HOME. THE OLD LADY SAYS TO THE OLD MAN..." I BET I CAN TELL YOUR AGE"...HE SAYS, "BET YOU CAN'T"..."WELL I CAN SAYS SHE"..."OK TELL ME"..."WELL STAND UP...NOW TAKE OFF ALL YOUR CLOTHES...NOW TURN AROUND...YOU'RE 95 YEARS OLD"..."WELL HOW DID YOU KNOW"...SAYS SHE, "YOU TOLD ME YESTERDAY." MY POINT IS--YOU HAVE HEARD ALL THESE THINGS BEFORE BUT HERE GOES.

THE INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT FUNCTION MUST REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE. THAT PRACTITIONER MUST KNOW EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THE UPPER ECHELON OF THE COLLEGE AND BE ABLE TO REACT TO IT. TOO MUCH DAMAGE CONTROL HAS TO BE ACTIVATED WHEN THE WHOLE MATTER COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED WITH PROACTIVE DECISIONS. THE PROFESSIONAL CAN TELL YOU WHAT WILL GET YOU INTO TROUBLE, HOW TO GET YOU OUT, AND FORMULATING A STRATEGY FOR MAKING THINGS HAPPEN IN A POSITIVE MANNER.

FOR INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT TO HAPPEN, THE COLLEGE MUST BE FOR REAL. YOU CANNOT SELL SOMETHING THAT IS NOT. THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES DO NOT WEAR WELL IN THIS BUSINESS. THE QUALITY WORK MUST BE APPARENT ON CAMPUS...YOU MUST LOOK

AND FEEL LIKE QUALITY COUNTS...FROM THE GROUNDS TO THE CLASSROOM LECTURE. THAT IS REALLY ALL THAT WE HAVE TO MARKET. AND THAT FEELING CAN GET ACROSS TO THE PUBLIC.

AND LASTLY, MAKE THE INSTITUTION WORK FOR ADVANCEMENT. EACH EMPLOYEE SHOULD BE AN INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT PERSON. THE FIRST WELCOME ON CAMPUS, THE EFFICIENTLY RUN ADMISSION OFFICE, THE INTRODUCTION OF A TEACHER TO A CLASS...EACH CAN MAKE OR BREAK ANYTHING A PRESIDENT CAN DO AT THE COLLEGE. EXAMPLES ABOUND WHERE A FRIENDLY GESTURE ON THE PART OF AN EMPLOYEE HAS LED TO GREAT REWARDS FOR THE COLLEGE.

THE MODERN COLLEGE PRESIDENT'S JOB IS A POSSIBLE ONE. EACH ONE OF YOU HERE TODAY IS A TESTAMENT TO THAT FACT. WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN ONE OF THE FINEST OPPORTUNITIES THAT ANY INDIVIDUAL CAN HAVE IN A LIFETIME. AND IF WE USE IT WELL, IT GIVES TO OUR COMMUNITIES HOPE, OPPORTUNITY, AND SUCCESS. FOR OURSELVES IT GIVES A LIFE WORTH LIVING.

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